



Wladyslaw Szpilman

Our Final Project: Nynoshka Vazquez

The Beginning

- Szpilman was born on December 5, 1911 in Sosnowiec, Poland.
- He comes from a long line of Polish Jewish musicians.
- He moved to Germany to further his music studies in 1931.
- He lived with his mother, his father, his two sisters, and his brother.



The Calm Before The Storm

- He returned to Warsaw in 1933, and was a performer and composer of classical music.
- In 1935 he became the house pianist for Polish State Radio.
- His last broadcast before Germany invaded in 1939, was he most famous performance of Chopin's C# Minor Nocturne.



Ghetto Life

- In October 1940, all Jews were confined into the Warsaw Ghetto. (Szpilman and his family did not need to relocate because their apartment lay within the “Jewish District”).
- Szpilman continued to write music while in the ghetto, and worked in cafes playing the piano.



Camp Life

- In 1942, Szpilman's family was deported to Treblinka (An Extermination Camp - None Survived)
- Szpilman was able to escape from transportation, when his friend Itzhak Heller (A Jewish Police Officer) pulled him from the crowd.
- Szpilman stayed in the ghetto as a laborer.
- He went into hiding on the "Aryan" side of the wall with help from his fellow musicians and people from Polish Radio, once the ghetto was abolished.
- In 1944 he was found hiding by a German officer, who did not kill him, instead asked him to play the piano then proceeded to place him in a different hiding spot and brought him food.



Acts of Resistance

- During his time as a laborer in the Jewish ghetto he also helped smuggle weapons for the Warsaw uprising.



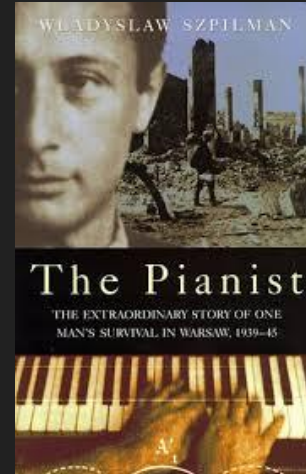
Death or Survival?

- Due to the help of the musicians, the polish radio employees, and the german officer, Szpilman survived the Holocaust.



The Aftermath

- After the war in 1945, Szpilman published his memoir “Death of a City” (in Polish) which was shut down and not released until the 1950s. His son then released it in German, “The Miraculous Survival”, in 1998. And then released in English, “The Pianist”, which was then turned into a movie in 2002 after his death.
- He married, Halina, in 1950. They had two sons, Andrzej and Christopher.



The Lesson To Be Learned

- Szpilman died on July 6, 2000 in Warsaw, Poland at the age of 88. His wife died in 2020 at the age of 92. Their sons are still alive.
- I believe the major themes or lessons to be learned from Szpilman's story is determination and passion. His determination to stay alive, and his passion for music and the piano are what kept him going and what saved his life. His talent was recognized which invited others in.



Sources

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